



Fleur de Lis

THE JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES

SPRING 2019

NUMBER 255

Jim Leonard's Rose Violet Collection - Lafayette, Louisiana

~Photo by Linda Trahan

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2019 is moving along, and spring is just around the corner. With each passing day, we find ourselves closer to iris bloom season at least in the northern hemisphere. While the winter in Arkansas hasn't been extremely cold, it has been dark and wet. As I look at the iris foliage, I'm surprised at how green it has stayed throughout the winter. I have to keep reminding myself that it's early and there is still plenty of time for frigid temperatures to nip the foliage back. The last freeze of 2018 was on April 8th, so there is still plenty of time for winter damage to slip into my garden. Hopefully, it won't come after the plants have sent up stalks like it did last year.

Looking at the luxurious green foliage always makes me wonder if bloom will come early. While things appear to be headed in that direction, bouts of cooler weather will certainly slow the progression down.

Hopefully, everyone has registered for the Convention in Lafayette. I've never been there that I didn't have a good time, and this year won't be any different. I'm looking forward to the gardens, seeing friends, going to the meetings, seeing the iris shows and acquiring new plants.

Need I remind you that the SLI Convention is our only money making event? Any money we make helps to fund the society and keep those glossy Fleur de Lis coming to your mailbox. Please think about making donations to the live or silent auctions. If you aren't attending the convention donating is not a problem. Donations can be sent to me or given to someone in your area that is attending the convention. If you get them to Lafayette, I promise that we will turn them into money for SLI.

This convention will mean that I'm officially halfway through with my second term as president. I'll really be looking forward to the 2019 convention when I get to pass the presidency on to our next leader. It hasn't been a daunting task, thanks to ample help, but by 2020 I'll be ready to move on, and I am sure SLI will be ready for someone else to step in as the new SLI President. After all, I'd hate to wear out my welcome and, like stale bread, have limited uses.

The Charles W. Army Jr. Award (SLI Popularity Poll) was mailed out in mid-January. Did you receive yours and mail it back in by the deadline? David Nitka has been doing

an excellent job with the poll. We need to remember that the list isn't just for new, recently introduced irises though was designed to recognize them. It includes recent irises (after winning AIS Awards, Iris Society of Australia Awards or receiving three write-in votes) but also includes older irises that are still popular and keep getting voted on each year. Two in the current poll are from the 1950s. Those two obviously have a lot of staying power to have been grown and enjoyed by gardeners for over 50 years. Just remember that three write-in votes not only add an iris to the list but three votes are required to keep it on the list.

A new year means new irises will be for sale. I know I will add to my expanding collection and I hope you do as well. Peruse the ads in this issue or contact the vendors listed in the commercial listing for their offerings. We need to encourage the commercial sources to keep selling Louisiana irises and spending money with them is the best way to do that. Thanks to the internet and social media with some early previews I've already got a "got to have" "need to buy" list going.

If my math is correct, this will mark my 20th year of membership in SLI, but it could be the 21st. While the society as a whole may have grown some in recent years, the number of people participating in the society has declined remarkably since my first convention in 1999. I am well aware that SLI isn't the only group facing this challenge, but I'm perplexed as to what to do about it. Attending conventions is a nice way to become involved, but if you can't do that and would like to get more involved please contact me or anyone on the board. We are always looking for help. It feels like I've been beating the drum for involvement for several years with little response. I hate to think that one day SLI will simply cease to exist because of lack of involvement, but it is a definite possibility.

On a happier note, I wish everyone the best as we celebrate spring and iris season. After all, bloom is the reward for last year's work so take plenty of time to enjoy as much of it as we can.

*Looking forward to seeing
you all in Lafayette,*

~ Robert

"Welcome" to our new Society for Louisiana Irises members:

- C. Jeansonne, Shreveport, LA
- B. Worthen, Shreveport, LA
- M. Elrod, Shreveport, LA
- K. Osyrus, Lake Saint Louis, MO (youth member)
- E. Hickman, West Chester, PA
- C. Moyer, Doylestown, PA
- B. Stephens, Dyersburg, TN
- L. Egner, Kinden, TX

Thank You To These Recent SLI Donors:

David Nitka, Feeding Hills, MA
MJ Urist, Tully, NY
Daphne Sawyer, Tryon, NC
Jeannie Rogers, Cheneyville, NC

**Society for Louisiana Irises
General Membership Meeting
April 14, 2018 - New Orleans, LA**

1. Call to Order

The Society for Louisiana Irises 2018 General Membership Meeting was opened by Robert Treadway in New Orleans LA at 9am CST

2. Reading of the Minutes of the General Membership Meeting on April 22, 2017, Addison Texas

Motion was made by Edna Claunch to accept the minutes as submitted, seconded by MJ Urist, and unanimously approved.

3. Treasurer's Report

Printed copy was made available to membership by Treasurer, Ron Killingsworth. Ron described the organization as being in better shape than the previous year. No questions or comments offered by membership present.

4. Membership Report

Membership report was passed out to attendees. Information included breakdown of membership by country and state. Ron Killingsworth reported membership is currently at one of the highest membership levels we've had in some time. Ron typically sends out at least 2 reminders when members fail to re-up, but not all respond. Ron suggested gifting memberships to friends and family. A membership of 550 would provide adequate funds for meeting printing and mailing costs of the Fleur de Lis. Currently proceeds from the silent and live auctions at the annual conventions offset shortages.

5. New Business

a) Status Report on the Society for Louisiana Iris International and Invitation to move the Society for Louisiana Iris Membership to the Society for Louisiana Iris International

Brief summary of 501(c)3 status by Robert Treadway describing steps taken to bring the organization into compliance with IRS requirements. "After years of attempting to resolve the issue, we obtained the assistance of a CPA with experience in these issues who worked with an IRS arbitrator. Our best option was to change the name of the organization and reapply. The board voted on this proceeding with this measure during their October 2017 meeting. The move will not impact the organization other than its legal name. A new organization was chartered with the State of Louisiana as The Society for Louisiana Iris International, and a new application for 501(c)3 status was filed with the IRS. The first stage has been approved, and the second stage is under review at this time. We are confident it will be approved. The membership is being asked to transfer the membership and funds from SLI to SLII." Ron clarified in response to a question from Benny Trahan that the change is the legal name change to Society for Louisiana Iris international and that we will continue to DBA the Society for Louisiana Iris. Edna Claunch expressed support from the floor for the name change, especially the international component as we do represent an international community. Motion from the Edna Claunch that the members of SLI move

to SLII. Motion was seconded. Show of hands vote passed unanimously.

Resolution to move funds from SLI to SLII was solicited by Robert Treadway. Wording for the resolution:

"This organization at which a quorum was present adopts the following resolution to transfer the funds for the Society for Louisiana Irises into the accounts to be established for the Society for Louisiana Iris International, a limited liability corporation registered within the State of Louisiana, under the control of its Board of Directors and officers as established by the language of the constitution and the bylaws of the Society for Louisiana Iris International. "

Motion to accept the resolution made by Patrick O'Connor, seconded by Paul Gossett. Vote passed unanimously.

b) Other New Business

None offered.

6. Motion to Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Joe Musacchia. Seconded by Ron Killingsworth. Approved unanimously.

**Society for Louisiana Iris International
General Membership Meeting
April 14, 2018 - New Orleans, LA**

1. Call to Order

The Society for Louisiana Iris International 2018 General Membership Meeting was called to order by Robert Treadway in New Orleans LA at 9:16 am CST.

2. Election of Officers

The slate of officers and board candidates was presented by MJ Urist, nominating committee chair, as follows:

President: Robert Treadway

Vice President: Joe Musacchia

Acting Recording Secretary: MJ Urist

Treasurer: Ron Killingsworth

Editor and Layout Artist of *Fleur de Lis*: Jaime Cloud

Board Members: MJ Urist, Roland Guidry, Patrick O'Connor, Paul Pastorek, Michael Reed Charles Perilloux

Robert Treadway called for nominations from the floor. None were offered. Motion made by Joe Musacchia to accept the slate of officers and board members as offered. Motion seconded by Patrick O'Connor. Slate of officers accepted unanimously.

3. New business

a) 2019 Convention to be held in Lafayette, LA, April 4, 5 & 6. Ron Betzer and Jim Leonard chairing preparations. 2020 Convention tentatively scheduled for Shreveport, LA.

b) By-laws and Constitution

Copies of revised By-laws and Constitution for Society for Louisiana Iris International were distributed by Robert Treadway for membership approval. Motion made by Paul Gossett to accept the by-laws and constitution as presented. Seconded by Patrick O'Connor. Membership approved motion unanimously.

c) Comments offered by Edna Claunch thanking the Board of Directors hard work on 501(c)3, and to GNOIS for an excellent convention. Sentiments echoed by other convention participants, including Paul Gossett and Patrick O'Connor.

d) Robert Treadway summarized the need to look forward to maintain the organization and support membership goals and funding. Robert Treadway and Ron Killingsworth solicited and encouraged input from the membership, for ideas and suggestions to further the organization's mission and goals.

4. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Edna Claunch with second from the floor. Meeting adjourned by President, Robert Treadway at 9:34 am CST.

**Society for Louisiana Irises
International Corp
10329 Caddo Lake Road
Mooringsport, LA 71060**

Financial Report for Period 1 January 2018 to 1 January 2019

Income	
2018 Convention – Boutique Income	\$1,410.00
2019 Convention Lafayette Registration	\$358.00
Advertising – “Fleur de Lis”	\$357.00
<i>Convention 2018 in New Orleans</i>	
Boutique sales	\$159.50
Live Auction	\$2,370.85
Silent Auction	\$1,643.18
<i>Contributions</i>	
Honorariums	\$1,000.00
Contributions	\$1,479.00
Dues – Annual	\$5,111.00
Sales – Books, CD’s, Spec Pubs, Other	\$751.97
Total Income	\$ 15,090.50

Expenses	
Award Purchase	\$175.49
Convention 2019 in Lafayette	
Bus Deposit	\$500.00
Hotel Deposit	\$950.00
“Fleur de Lis”	
Bulk Mail Fee	\$225.00
Layout	\$2,700.00
Postage	\$966.07
Printing	\$5,493.96
Shipping from printer	\$479.02
Operations	
Office Supplies	\$259.63
Postage, Mailing Services	\$158.39
Printing and Copying	\$241.72
Show Expenses	
Vases and Show Ribbons	\$454.87
Printing of Show Entry tags	\$210.00
SLII LLC	
LLC Dissolve	\$105.00
SLII Corp	
IRS Filing	\$275.00
State Filing Fee	\$80.00
Total Expenses	\$13,274.15

Net Income	\$1,826.10
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Donations to the SLI Live and Silent Auctions

SLI depends on the Live and Silent Auctions at our national conventions for a significant portion of revenues. Items appropriate to the auctions are requested.

If you cannot attend the convention or wish to send contributions in advance, please address them to (and please be sure to indicate the auction on the address label):

Jim Leonard
ATTN: SLI AUCTION
103 Kimball Drive
Lafayette, LA 70508

Phone: (337) 277-9930

Suggested Donation Items:

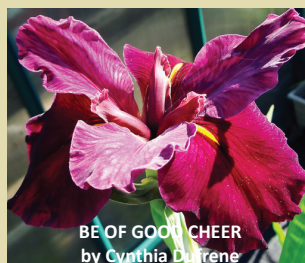
- Iris seedlings
- Garden Decor
- Gardening Books
- Iris-themed artwork
- Regional Gift Baskets
- Nursery Gift Certificates



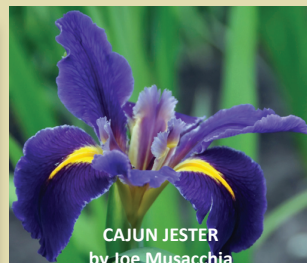
LOUISIANA IRIS

QUALITY LOUISIANA IRIS RHIZOMES
GROWN IN MISSISSIPPI
BY CYNTHIA DUFRENE

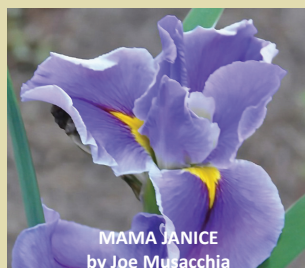
Introductions 2019



BE OF GOOD CHEER
by Cynthia Dufrene



CAJUN JESTER
by Joe Musacchia



MAMA JANICE
by Joe Musacchia



MARIE LAVEAU
by Joe Musacchia



EILEEN HOLLANDER
by Patrick O'Connor



MAGAZINE STREET
by Patrick O'Connor



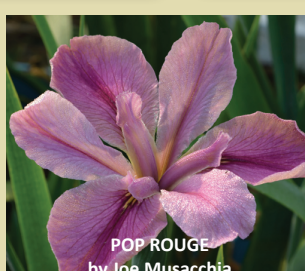
IGNATIUS REILLY
by Patrick O'Connor



ELLEN'S PAPARAZZI
by Benny Trahan



PELICAN ISLAND
by Joe Musacchia



POP ROUGE
by Joe Musacchia



LAFITTE'S LANDING
by Joe Musacchia

2019 Introductions Offered at \$50

Our new online catalog will be available mid-February 2019. It will display our complete inventory and feature the new Introductions of **Cynthia Dufrene, Patrick O'Connor, Joe Musacchia, Benny Trahan and Roland Guidry.**

To place an order for 2019, please visit us at:

Cindyslouisianairis.com



2019 Society for Louisiana Irises Annual Convention

April 4-7, 2019 ~ Lafayette, La

Registration Form

Room reservations are separate from convention registration. Contact Hilton Garden Inn (2350 West Congress, Lafayette, LA) for reservations at (337) 291-1977. We have special room pricing for the Convention, using the Code 'IRIS'. The convention price for a standard room is \$104 + tax. Convention Co-Chairs: Ron Betzer & Jim Leonard ((337) 232-0823

Please Print

Name: _____ E-Mail: _____
 Address: _____ Phone: _____
 City: _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Name of those traveling with you (unless they are registering separately) _____

Convention Schedule & Pricing

	#OF PERSONS		PRICE		TOTAL
Convention Registration Fee		X	\$35.00	=	
Thursday Tour: (the Botanical Gardens in Baton Rouge, Dr. Wayne Stromeyer's gardens and stop at Lake Martin, St Martin Parish, La.)		X	\$48.00	=	
Thursday Lunch: Oak Lodge in Baton Rouge (included)			-		
Friday Tour: (Ron & Eugenie Betzer's and Jim & Kathy Leonard's iris gardens and Avery Island Jungle garden)		X	\$48.00	=	
Friday Lunch: Po-Boy sandwich from Old Tyme Grocery (included) Please select: <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey <input type="checkbox"/> Beef <input type="checkbox"/> Ham <input type="checkbox"/> Shrimp <input type="checkbox"/> Salad		X	-	=	
Friday Dinner: Please select from below:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Smoked Brisket		X	\$24.00	=	
<input type="checkbox"/> Grilled Chicken Breast		X	\$24.00	=	
<input type="checkbox"/> Spinach Enchiladas		X	\$22.00	=	
Saturday Banquet: Please select from below:					
<input type="checkbox"/> Roasted Pork Medallions		X	\$27.00	=	
<input type="checkbox"/> Broiled Salmon		X	\$28.00	=	
<input type="checkbox"/> Grilled Portobello Mushroom		X	\$22.00	=	
Optional Donation to help SLI General Operating Fund					
Grand Total = Total Registration Fees + Total for Tours + Total for Meals + Donation					

Please complete and mail this form so that it arrives no later than **March 25, 2019**. Reservations will be acknowledged by e-mail, if one is provided. You will receive a packet upon arrival at the convention with name tags, tickets for meals and events, and other necessary information. Please visit the website for additional copies of this form and to review any updates or changes: <http://www.louisianas.org>

Send Registration Form & Payment to:

Ron L. Killingsworth, 10329 Caddo Lake Road,
 Mooringsport, LA 71060
 Phone: 318-426-3654 / E-mail: retmiagt@gmail.com
***No refunds after March 25, 2019**

Payment Options:

- Checks Payable to SLI OR
- PayPal (must include e-mail address to receive invoice if choosing Paypal option)



2019 Society for Louisiana Irises Convention Schedule

PRELIMINARY TIMELINE - ALL CONVENTION ACTIVITIES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

THURSDAY, APRIL 4

- 7:30 AM Depart Hotel for Botanical Gardens in Baton Rouge, Dr. Wayne Stromeyer's Estate, and Lake Martin, St Martin Parish, La.
- 12:00 PM Lunch at Oak Lodge in Baton Rouge
- 4:00 PM Arrive at Hotel
- 6:00-7:00 PM Welcome Mixer - (Location TBD)
- 7:30-8:30 PM SLI Board Meeting - (Location TBD)

FRIDAY, APRIL 5

- 8:00 AM Bus departs Hotel for tours of Ron and Eugenie Belzer's and Jim and Kathy Leonard's iris gardens and Avery Island Jungle Garden.
- 4:00 PM Return to Hotel
- 5:30-6:30 PM Cocktail Hour - Cash bar (Location TBD)
- 6:30-9:00 PM Dinner and Slideshow - (Location TBD)

SATURDAY, APRIL 6

- 7:00-10:00 AM Show entries accepted
- 10:15 AM-11:30 AM Show Judging
- 10:30 - 11:00 AM General Membership Meeting - (Location TBD)
- 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM Symposium - Speakers: Charles Perilloux - Update On The Species Preservation Project & Elizabeth Brooks, Executive Director for Moncus Park (Location TBD)
- 11:30 AM-12:30 PM Show opens to SLI members only for voting on SLI awards
- 12:30-4:00 PM Show and rhizome sale opens to General Public
- 5:30-6:30 PM Cocktail Hour - Cash Bar and Silent Auction
- 6:30-9:00 PM Dinner, Awards Banquet, and Live Auction

SUNDAY, APRIL 7

- 8:00 AM-10:00 AM Judges Training taught by Rusty McSparrin at Ron Betzer's garden
- 9:00AM-2:00 PM Show

CONVENTION ENDS

Show Time!

~Story by Jim Leonard

Iris growing weather has been perfect: a mild and wet winter. The convention schedule for the first weekend in April should be right on target for viewing gardens full of Louisiana Irises.

Our garden is on tour, but it is not really a garden. We have an area where Louisiana irises are grown in pots for resale. The area holds numerous pots which contain approximately 300 different varieties of Louisiana irises. At our farm, you will see sections of some of your old favorites like 'Dixie Deb', 'Black Widow', and 'Sea Knight'. You will also discover hundreds of Jeri in bloom, along with Robert Treadway's favorites. There are seedlings and new introductions by Kevin Vaughn, as well as rows of pots of hybridized irises by Pat O'Connor, Joe Musacchia and Richard Morgan. Additionally, with a short walk away thru the woods, you will discover growing ponds where I have planted my iris seedlings for your enjoyment and observation.

Our most recent addition is a native Louisiana iris section where I have been trying to propagate native blues and reds. We have planted natives found in different geographic areas south of Abbeville, Louisiana, with the goal of eventually moving them from their thirty gallon pots into sunken rows for transplanting back into fresh water swamp areas. You will find that if you drive in areas where native irises once vigorously grew, the habitat has changed. Field ditches that were once filled with water to facilitate the growing of rice, have been drained to accommodate the growing of sugar cane.

Over the last ten years, the conversion of fields from rice to sugar cane has taken place due to the farmer's net profit, or lack thereof, when growing rice. Parish governments have accommodated the sugar cane farmers by chemically spraying the ditches to kill vegetation in order to facilitate the flow of water away from the fields. Our native Louisiana irises have been a casualty in the change of field crops.

Not only has the habitat changed around Abbeville, the area from Pecan Island to Creole, Louisiana, was also drastically changed in the aftermath of Hurricane Rita. The storm surge was massive and gulf waters raced over La. Highway 82, flooding freshwater marshes on the north side of the road where large clumps of native blues and white Louisiana irises had thrived contentedly for generations. Unlike past hurricanes, the salt water surge was so large that it took weeks, almost up to a month, to drain out of the marshes, during which time the standing water effectively killed the iris clumps.

Native reds, in their natural habitat, have also been even tougher to find. At the moment I am able to collect from only three areas, and even in those areas, the clumps have been sparse. I have gone back to these areas in hope of gathering seed pods, however, much to my disappointment, have discovered that the irises did not produce seed pods. I do not know why. Likewise, the reds which bloomed last year did not have pods. So, this year, instead of waiting on a hummingbird or a bumble bee, I am going to pollinate the blooms myself. We are very much looking forward to seeing you at the farm!



*Visitors enjoying 'Jeri' at the 2015 SLI Convention
~Photo by Linda Trahan*

Louisiana Hayride

~Story & Photos by Sam Caldwell

(Reprint of an article published in the AIS Bulletin on the 1948 SLI convention in Lafayette)

There's a new love story down in the land of Evangeline. Everybody's crazy about irises. But they're not the sedate, unemotional type of iris lovers. They have fun, more than anybody else I know.

I was invited to Lafayette, Louisiana, to the 1948 annual meeting of the Mary Swords Debaillon Louisiana Iris Society - an official representative of the American Iris Society and all that sort of thing, you know. All the way down I pondered over some historic utterance to be tossed off casually upon my arrival, but all I could think of was, "Lafayette, I am here!" A good line, all right, but it's been used before.

Lafayette is southwest of Baton Rouge in the rich, generally level delta country. Enroute there you pass through places with names like Livonia, Opelousas, and Carencro. Luxuriant vegetation suggests the tropics. There are great fields of rice and sugar cane and vastly wooded swamplands in which moss-draped cypresses tower above their swollen trunks and raise their gnarled "knees" out of the dark swamp water. It is a "different" land, and you're not surprised to find the wonderfully friendly and hospitable people speaking a somewhat different language. The French influence is still very strong.

Friday evening preceding the day of the meeting I ate gumbo and rice and met early arrivers at Aggieldand

Inn, just outside Lafayette on the Abbeville highway. It was much like a family reunion, for some of the members see each other but this one time in a year and they talk about irises and everything else. In formality was the keynote, here and later. The W. B. MacMillans (he was the first president of the society) were "Mr. Mac" and "Peggy Mac." Professor Ira Nelson, head of the department of horticulture at Southwestern Louisiana Institute, was "Ike." There wasn't a sacred cow in



HOME OF THE ABBEVILLE REDS!
Mrs. Ray J. Cornay, Mrs. C. F. Fitzenreiter and Mr. Cornay collect colorful natives in a swamp near Abbeville.

the crowd, though I did meet one the next day.

Following my expressed desire to see a bayou (buy-you, they call it), Ray Cornay - than whom there couldn't be a better host and guide - took me out Saturday morning to a spot on Bayou Vermilion where we left the car to admire a vista along the water way framed by giant live oaks whose spreading branches touched overhead.

From somewhere in the rear of us came the sound of muffled snorts, like a vacuum cleaner trying to swallow a small rug. "Get back in the car!" yelled Ray. I obeyed - no questions asked - especially after catching a glimpse in the underbrush of a great gray Brahman bull charging up at us with malice aforethought. Chagrined because we both reached safety in the auto mobile, the big animal lowered his head and butted the rear fenders. But when Ray started the motor and backed into him, the bull's confusion was delightful to see. I hope there are good psychiatrist-veterinarians in the locality; if not, that poor Brahman's ego will never reach its accustomed level again.

When Irises Go to College

It is not surprising to find iris interest centered around educational institutions, for that condition exists in various parts of the country. But at Southwestern Louisiana Institute, in Lafayette, a particularly happy situation prevails. Perhaps it is

because they are proud to spread the fame of native Louisiana irises; perhaps it is just because they're nice people-the officials of SLI have been extremely cooperative in promoting iris activities. The test garden for Louisiana irises is maintained under Prof. Nelson's direction at the Institute's horticulture farm. The annual iris show and tea is always held in the campus Student Center. Business meetings of the local iris society are also held on the campus; I attended the meeting this year and noted that Dr. Joel L. Fletcher, President of Southwestern, extended an official welcome to the delegates and seemed genuinely glad to have them. Several members of the SLI faculty in addition to Prof. Nelson are leaders in the iris work. And around the edges of beautiful Cypress Lake, in the very heart of the campus, are mass plantings of Abbeville Reds, Abbeville Yellows and other forms of native irises.

The test garden is clean and well kept, but a strong, dry wind on Saturday morning at the time of the visit wasn't doing the flowers any good. They are in long beds approximately four feet wide, with grass paths between.

Many of the best blooms had been cut for the show to be staged in the afternoon, but it was still possible to note the very great color range that exists in the Louisiana irises. An attempt is made to have in the test garden a specimen of every variation among the native irises, including collected individuals as well as those produced by the plant breeders. Currently, no name is accepted for registration until a rhizome of the plant has flowered in the test garden. While undoubtedly helpful in preventing the registration of inferior

and identical or nearly identical plants, this practice will be difficult to maintain now that Louisiana irises are being grown in many parts of this country and in foreign countries as well.

One of the important activities at the test garden this year was the production of seed from controlled crosses among superior plants - packets of the seed to be distributed to members of the Mary Swords Debaillon society for a small sum to cover the cost of postage and handling.

What's in a Name?

In 1941, when their society was founded, the Louisiana iris enthusiasts honored the memory of one of their pioneer collectors, Mrs. Mary Swords Debaillon, by incorporating her name in theirs. Recently it was decided to perpetuate the memory of the late Mrs. Debaillon by instituting the Mary Swords Debaillon Award - an annual award which will go to the top ranking Louisiana iris. Exact details for giving this trophy are being worked out, and it is anticipated that this will amount to a "Dykes Medal of the Louisianas."

Meanwhile, it was decided to shorten the name of the society. "Louisiana Iris Society" was rejected on the ground that it merely indicates an iris society in a particular locality; the members wanted the world to know that they like Louisiana irises. After threshing the matter about for a while the Executive Board came up with a recommendation which was subsequently approved by members at the business meeting early Saturday afternoon, and now it is officially the "Society for Louisiana Irises."

Sold American!

Most exciting action of the business session, from my point of view, was the unanimous decision to affiliate with the American Iris Society. Though approximately half of the Louisiana group already belonged to the AIS, this affiliation brings more than a hundred new members to our rolls. The Louisiana society will retain its identity and will continue to issue mimeographed bulletins. Material of outstanding significance, however, will be published in the AIS BULLETIN. The two societies will jointly maintain the test garden in its present location. Miss Caroline Dormon, whose writings and beautiful drawings are already well known to Bulletin readers, was voted the Louisiana society's Service Award.

Ike Shows 'Em

Bronzed, energetic Ike Nelson is from the "Show me" state, they said, so Ike always runs the annual Iris Show. And very well, indeed, if this one was typical. The Student Center at Southwestern was transformed into a lush tropical garden, with irises as the main feature, though I couldn't overlook such exotics as strelitzias, papayas and other jungle natives that must have come from the greenhouse at the horticulture farm. A cleverly constructed screen of large green bamboo stakes concealed the service counter on one side of the big room and made a perfect background for the specimen stalks of iris placed in front of it. These, incidentally, appeared to be growing out of a bed of spongy brown earth, though actually, they were in bottles of water which were sunk in sawdust. The effect of natural growth was amazing, especially where plants of the native species were massed, for these had been brought in from the swamp with

their graceful foliage intact, and they appeared quite at home in their new quarters.

All afternoon the crowd milled about discussing this bloom and that bloom, and comparing these irises with those in the gardens back at home. And always one or two worried looking people could be seen staring at a spectacular bicolor produced by Ray Cornay. Alas, it was phony.

Miss Del Norte Theriot, as French as her name, was a most engaging Cajun lady when she came bearing gifts at the banquet Saturday night. Retiring President Lillian Trichel, planning a collecting trip into the swamps the next day, received from Miss Theriot a bottle of snake-bite medicine (it seems to be the same everywhere). The MacMillans, proud possessors of a compost heap containing 400 rare old hen eggs that had failed to hatch, were given clothes pin nose clamps.

A truly generous gesture came at the close of the banquet when each of the more than one hundred guests received a strong, carefully packed Louisiana iris seedling from a choice cross made at the test garden.

Off to the Swamp

One of the exciting things about the Louisiana Ins country is that not all of the iris frontiers have yet been explored. You don't acquire a choice variety by sitting comfortably in an arm chair, choosing from tempting color plates in a new catalog and mailing a check off to the dealer. No, you slip into boots and hiking clothes, grab a stick to let the moccasins know you're coming, and with a party of kindred souls fare forth into the swamplands. What if

the Cajun countrymen think you're a bunch of fools out pulling up "snake grass?" What if the bulls and bugs and wood ticks and alligators all descend on you for invading their haunts? If you can just drag your feet through the oozy black goo that's holding you back you know that beyond the next big cypress may be a super giant Abbeville Red that will make you the envy of every Louisiana iris fancier. Or besides that distant coulee you'll find a *giganticaerulea* of a tint no one has seen before.

Thus on the second big day of their annual meeting, the Louisianans divided into congenial groups, each under an experienced guide, and set out on collecting trips in the Abbeville area. They went to the Steen and Buteaud swamps; they went to Iris Heaven and New Iris Heaven, and some went to secret spots known only to themselves. Again with Ray Cornay as guide, and his wife, Katherine (a real mainspring who helps keep the Society for Louisiana Irises ticking) and Mrs. C. F. Fitzenreiter of Lake Charles for company, I went out not so much to find something new as to see and photograph typical natural plantings of the four irises indigenous to the locality.

Abbeville Reds grew pretty much to themselves in a cypress swamp. Mostly it was a dark and mysterious place. The great buttressed trunks of cypresses rose out of black mud in which fallen logs and limbs lay rotting. But cypress foilage is comparatively sparse and plenty of light would have penetrated to the earth had it not been for Spanish moss, which hung everywhere. You felt that giant spiders with plenty of extra thread had woven gray shawls

to throw over the pendulous cypress branches.

At various points in the swamp, we found clearings where sunlight filtered through, and there were the colonies of Abbeville Red irises, the plants usually standing three to four feet high. Few other things were growing in the swamp mud, possibly because it must be underwater much of the time. I did notice here and in other locations where the native irises grew, a beautiful white "spider lily" - a species of *hymenocallis*.

Iris giganticaerulea - usually in a light blue form - seemed to grow in more places than any of the others. We saw it beside the bayous and often in the ditches alongside the roads.

Katherine Cornay guided us through a rice plantation to a huge woods where there must have been an acre of *Iris foliosa* [now called *I. brevicaulis*], and not far from there we found sizable patches of *I. virginica* both of these species just coming into bloom. While this was flat and boggy country, it was not so wet as the swamp home of the Abbeville Reds. Here there was also much more shrubby undergrowth and a greater variety of trees, with oaks predominating.

We could find few variations from the typical blue flowers of the *foliosas*, but we did locate several plants with extra good branching of the flower stalks, and Ray quickly dug them up with the wicked looking machete that he had been carrying around all day. The machete had another use. We were walking through the bog when Ray said, "Hold it - there he is." Just a few feet from me lay the blunt, ugly form of

a cotton-mouth moccasin. Death in a convenient package if we became panicky and careless. Quickly, but as calmly as though it were just another iris rhizome to be sliced in two, the machete blade was swung downward. And that's how a snake lost his head in all of this enthusiasm over Louisiana irises.

The next day (Monday) I had planned to head north for Shreveport, but hearing that cool weather was holding back irises in that section I determined to go south instead to see the famous Jungle Gardens at Avery Island. But first came a quick trip to the Southwestern campus for some pictures of Cypress Lake. All went well until I took a path along the back side of the lake and suddenly found myself confronted with two 3 foot alligators. By now I had decided that in Louisiana you've just got to take your fauna with your flora -and be calm about it. Also, I was trying to impress some students who were watching, so I just ignored the 'gators and kept going. The first one obligingly slithered off the path and into the water. The second - a dizzy blonde with lots of yellow scales set in among the black ones slashed around with her tail, raised up on her forelegs, hissed and snapped where my leg had been. No damage was done, except to my equanimity, but I hope that alligator grows up to be a suitcase soon.

Jungle Gardens

Jungle Gardens is the island domain of Mr. Edward A. McIlhenny, a world traveler of some renown, whose contributions in the field of horticulture have been outstanding. Ray Cornay and his junior edition, Tee-Ray, had visited it many times before but seemed glad of an excuse to go again. Tee-Ray (the name, at least) needs an explanation. A

contraction of the French "Petit Ray," it might be translated into English as "Li'l Ray," a name which doesn't exactly fit the athletic-looking young six-footer who answers to it.

At Avery Island, we were lucky enough to find Annisette Delcambre, right-hand man of Mr. McIlhenny in managing the various Jungle Gardens activities, and he showed us over the place. Undoubtedly a fairyland when the azalea and camellia seasons are at their height, the many acres of landscaped grounds and winding drives were still beautiful. I always marvel at grand old live oaks draped with Spanish moss, and Jungle Gardens is plentifully blessed with these, as well as with bamboos, palms, and countless other exotic trees, shrubs and flowers.

In the afternoon we climbed a wooden tower above the waters of a lake on which the leaves of lotus were unfolding. Around the water's edge in low willow-like trees were hundreds of nests attended by long-necked white birds-snowy egrets. Here was the famous bird sanctuary, and as evening drew on thousands of water fowl in many different species began to drop in out of the sky. Surely this is one of the wonder spots of the entire country. We saw the salt mines on the island; we visited the nursery where thousands of camellia plants were growing luxuriantly under lath shade. There also I saw a clump of a collected rosy tan Louisiana iris doing wonderfully well. Apparently, lath house conditions are ideal for these plants.

We drove past fields and more fields of perfectly prepared but unplanted ground. "What," I inquired, "will grow there?" and the answer was, "Peppers." It appears that much

of the pepper sauce that Americans consume on their meats and fish originates on Avery Island. The little peppers are grown and harvested, packed with a liquid in wooden casks to age for four years and then blended with other ingredients into the familiar hot sauce. But Mr. Delcambre was worried. The fields were ready and in a big greenhouse, we saw benches overflowing with hundreds of thousands of young pepper plants. It had been too dry, however, for the tedious task of transplanting them to the open. Unless rain came there was grave danger of a complete crop failure.

Thanks for the Boggy Rides

Next day I had to leave the good friends at Lafayette who had shown me Louisiana irises in gardens and in their native habitat and who had also shown me points of historic interest - Abbeville, New Iberia and St. Martinville - in the romantic Evangeline country. The sun had shone all through my visit, but on this morning clouds were boiling up. Truly it was "apres moi le deluge!" I scarcely had time to say "Opelousas" before the skies opened and a heavy general rain began that was still falling when I reached Memphis. Undoubtedly those broad acres of Avery Island are now waving with green foliage as Annisette Delcambre brings up his fiery little peppers. I'm happy about that. The thought of 1952 and no pepper sauce was depressing.

Sam Caldwell, from Brentwood, TN, was an early leader and official of the American Iris Society. His wide-ranging horticultural interests included Louisiana irises, but he is especially remembered for his work with Lycoris.



CURRENT DELIGHT
Peter Jackson



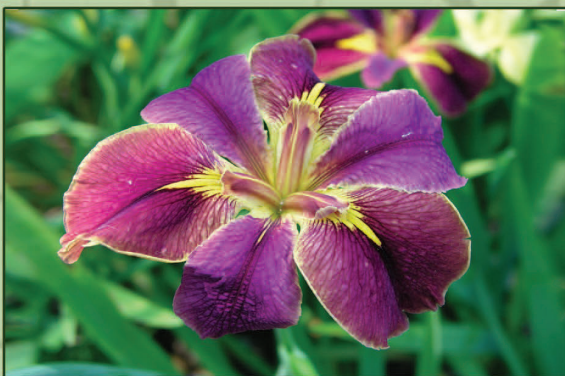
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It's About Time To Grow Some Irises From Seed

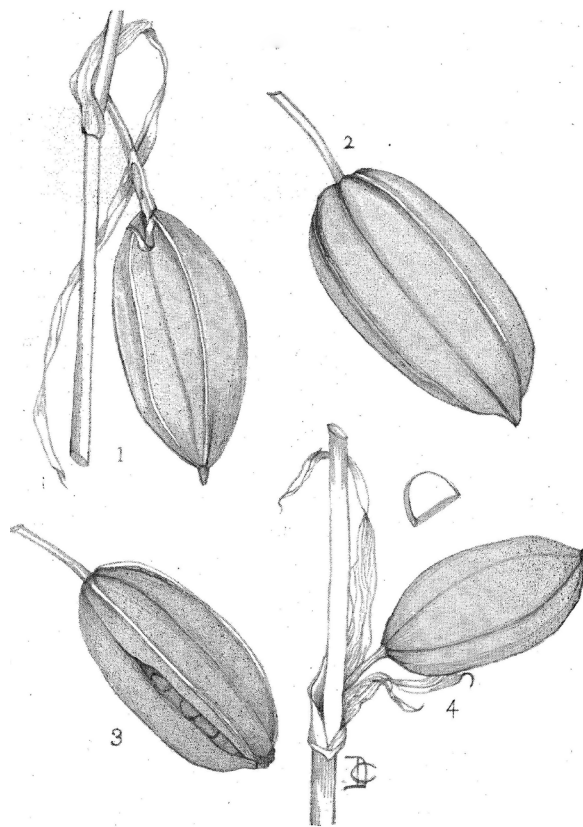
~Story and illustrations provided by Patrick O' Connor

Now may seem like an odd time of the year for an article on growing Louisiana irises from seeds. At present, there are none at hand. Only during bloom season will the seed pods begin to form, and then they will quickly be visible if a bee or human has pollinated a flower. The seeds will be mature enough to harvest and plant some weeks (more on this later) after the bloom season ends.

Now is a good time, however, to think about growing a few irises from seed to expand your planting at no cost or just to satisfy your curiosity about what a brand-new hybrid might look like. If you have nice irises already, there is a good chance that you will produce something beautiful and possibly unique.

It is also a good time to think through the process. How do you get from this year's flowers to a new hybrid in a couple of seasons? It is not difficult, but there are things to know. It never hurts to plan. During the bloom season, you'll need to decide if you want to pollinate a few flowers or allow the bees to do the work. One way or the other, if you grow irises, you will have seed pods in your garden. Of course, they can always be cut off and discarded, but if you choose to try your hand at growing out seedlings, you'll benefit from a few tips.

One might think it would be better to start with instructions on how to cross-pollinate a Louisiana iris. There is a good case for that since it's the way to get seeds from the parents you like most. While you can readily find descriptions of how to pollinate an iris flower in books and on the internet (references below), the best way is to find a real person to give a live demonstration. Making a cross is easy if you see it done once, but frequently it is difficult to match the iris parts you see in real time with



Drawings by Caroline Dormon of pods from collected irises of different colors ranging from white to deep violet-blue, but all forms of I. giganticaerulea. AIS Bulletin, January 1948.

those in drawings or pictures. The descriptions are better these days, but I have not forgotten the first year that I tried to make crosses based upon drawings from an SLI publication from the 1970s. I wound up putting the pollen in the wrong place, and none of my crosses were successful. It was humiliating, but the bee-crossed seeds I planted produced some very nice irises, some of which were named and are still grown today.

The bees know how it is done, and they are prolific. If you do nothing, here is what will happen. Bees will pollinate flowers, and seed pods will begin to form in the ovary, located in the stem between the flower and the stalk. Swelling will be evident within a few days or weeks. Within a month or so, the pods will be fully formed. If allowed to remain on the stalks, in about eight weeks many of the pods will begin to turn yellow and perhaps split open. Some seeds may

spill out. Left alone, all the seed pods eventually will turn brown and fall to the ground where the pods will deteriorate, and any remaining seeds will come into contact with the soil. The number of seeds in a pod varies with the particular iris but generally will range from 20 to 60. Many seeds will be destroyed by insects that will burrow through the corky seed coating and devour the core of the seed inside. A few will germinate where they fall, and new seedlings will begin to grow among the existing irises. If not destroyed by weeding and cleanup, a few could grow to blooming size irises, not by the next bloom season but the one following that.

If you can get new seedlings by doing nothing, how difficult can it be to succeed with the application of a more systematic approach? It's pretty hard to fail completely.

Keeping It Simple

One easy, traditional approach is as follows:

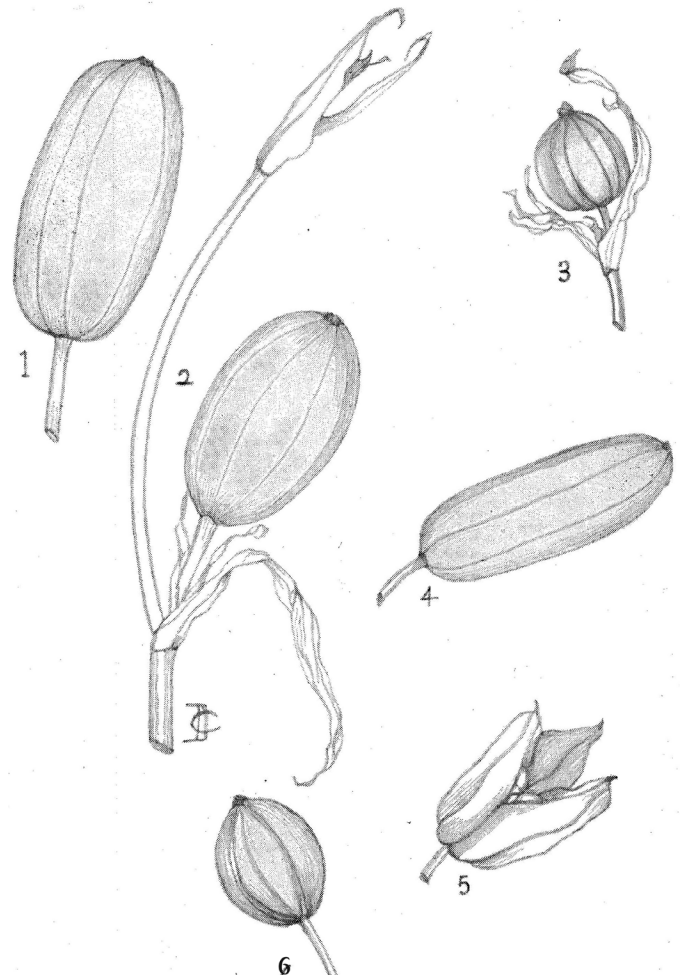
1. Harvest seeds when the pods begin to yellow and crack open, usually about eight weeks from the end of bloom.
2. Lightly score the pod with a sharp blade along several of the indentations and ridges in the pod, pry open and remove all seeds.
3. Immediately plant the seeds in pots (one pod per pot) using a high-quality potting soil. Don't allow the seeds to dry out. Optionally, soak them in water for a day or two in advance of planting.
4. Cover each seed with about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of the medium.
5. Water well and place in a shady location. Keep the pot moist but not soggy.
6. Monitor the pots to be sure that the seeds do not become exposed on the surface where they will be prey for insects; if they do pop up, push them down or add more soil.
7. Germination should begin in the fall or when nighttime temperatures begin to drop (usually November in Louisiana).
8. In a mild climate such as Louisiana, the seedlings are removed from the pot and planted directly into a garden bed in late January or early February, or they can be potted for later planting. In cold areas where planting in the dead of winter is not wise, potting – and protection of the seedlings – is required.

Most seeds that will germinate by this method will do so in the first year, but if not damaged by exposure or insects, additional germination may occur at roughly the same time the following year.

Varying Approaches, But First

There are simple variations of this process, described below, that are employed with success. There also are more heroic, time-consuming and expensive interventions you can apply if your interest takes you there and your lab is properly equipped. No lab? No problem. You can still try out some proven alternative approaches. They may require a little more time but could bump up the germination rate and be worth it to you.

The alternative methods of germinating iris seeds mostly deal with essentially the same issues. How to maximize the germination rate and, to a lesser extent, how to induce germination more quickly. As with the seeds of many plants, there is an issue of *dormancy* in iris seeds. Viable seeds are said to be in a dormant state when, given that the principal conditions required for germination are met – mainly water,



Caroline Dornon's drawing of the pods of a variety of species. 1 and 2 are I. nelsonii. 3 is the diminutive I. brevicaulis. 4 and 5 are collected plants from near New Orleans, perhaps natural hybrids, although the elongated shape of 4 is similar to I. virginica pods. 6 is a pod of I. fulva

gasses (air or oxygen), and an appropriate temperature – they nonetheless do not germinate for some time.. Or maybe never if the conditions to break dormancy are not achieved. Unlike radishes, which germinate prolifically and almost immediately (but which have considerably less attractive flowers), iris seeds germinate at a much lower rate due to natural barriers that must be overcome.

Plants presumably evolve patterns of seed dormancy because they are beneficial to survival. For example, early germination of seed in the fall just as crippling winter weather approaches may be less successful for a species than a period of dormancy that delays germination until after the danger of killing temperatures for tender seedlings has passed. In experiments that sped up the time of germination of Louisiana iris seeds, Joe Mertzweiler in Baton Rouge noted that he lost far more seedlings in the humid summer months due to damping off disease with early germination than he did with normal, and later, germination in mild

Louisiana winter weather.

When seeds germinate after falling to the ground, or hopefully in one of your pots, dormancy has been broken by the conditions to which they were exposed over some time. This success is not achieved for all seeds produced, however. If you read hybridizers and scientists on the subject of iris seed germination, you will find a bemoaning of “normal” germination rates of only 20 to 35 percent. As an amateur hybridizer who has mostly followed the keep-it-simple approach, my experience has been roughly in this range, although some crosses of hybrid seeds will hardly germinate at all and a few may approach 85 or 90 percent.

The core issue that hybridizers and others deal with is how to impose conditions that do a better job of breaking the barriers to germination than occur “naturally” (meaning just planting them in a pot or sticking them in the ground). Inhibitors to germination are said to be both physical and chemical (thankfully not psychological, although we can’t speak for the hybridizers themselves). But what, specifically, *are* the barriers that nature has evolved to suppress germination of iris seeds? There are theories and a few answers.

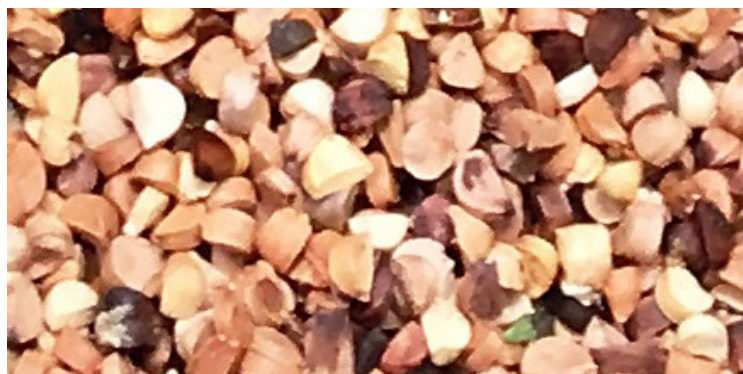
But first ... again ... keep in mind that the “seeds” you see when a pod splits open are only part of the story. Every seed consists of three parts: a protective *outer coating*, an



GNOIS board member Cynthia Maldonado with a bountiful harvest of *I. giganteaerulea* seeds from the 2018 season.

embryo (the new plant), and *endosperm*, which is a food supply for the new plant. Louisiana iris seeds have a rather thick outer coating composed a light, corky material that enables the seed to float, a convenient feature in their wetland home (but perhaps making them resistant to water penetration). Inside, the core of the seed is BB-shaped but slightly smaller. It contains the embryo and the endosperm that will nourish the new seedling between germination and the time it is planted.

Research on iris seeds (mainly on other types of irises) suggests that the physical and



chemical inhibitors to germination could involve all three of the parts of the seed. Louisiana iris seeds, in particular, have been little studied, and even for more widely grown types of irises, much more scientific study would be required for full understanding. But the most significant known barrier to germination in Louisianas is *the corky outer seed coating that inhibits water from reaching the core seed inside*.

Moisture is directly required for germination, and a flow of water may also be required to wash away or dissolve chemical substances that themselves are inhibitors that prevent germination. Outdoors in your keep-it-simple pot, rain and hand watering accomplish this to some extent. But various degrees of scarification have been employed to improve on the process and bump up the germination rate. Scarification involves “weakening, opening, or otherwise altering the coat of a seed to encourage germination.” One form this commonly takes with iris seeds is to carefully chip the corky coating of each seed to allow water to more readily permeate it. A further step is to peel away the corky coating entirely, leaving only the BB-shaped seed core to be planted. An even more aggressive step is to cut the outer edge of the seed core slightly.

Does this work? Studies are mixed concerning chipping, but it seems to make little difference. Peeling off the corky coating is more effective. In a 1995 SLI Special Publication, Joe Mertzweiller reported on an experiment he ran comparing methods of planting. Working with a mix of almost 1,200 seeds from eight different crosses using good hybrids (for genetic diversity), Joe hydrated the seeds for three to four days. Then he applied one of five planting methods. Several involved “cutting a very thin slice off the embryo end of the seed before planting.” A couple added a longer soaking: “a room temperature stratification for five to six weeks in a moisture-controlled planting medium.” This step presumably amplifies the application of water to wash away or dissolve chemical inhibitors to germination.

Along with the resulting overall germination percent, the methods were:

- A. 24% Seed coat chipped
- B. 34% Entire seed coat removed
- C. 31% Entire seed coat removed, light cut into seed core
- D. 46% Entire seed coat removed, light cut, stratified by additional hydration consisting of 5-6 weeks at room temperature
- E. 31% Entire seed coat removed, deeper cut, stratified by additional hydration consisting of 5-6 weeks at room temperature

Unfortunately, Joe did not report on a control group planted by the keep-it-simple method. The 24% germination rate reported by merely chipping the seed, however, does not represent much, if any, improvement on the approach. Do these variations look like a lot of work? You bet. Anytime you have to manipulate individual seeds rather than planting them in mass in a pot, you up the time required by a good bit. Compared to the keep-it-simple method, are the more labor-intensive methods worthwhile? You can raise the germination rate a bit, but whether that is worth the additional time and trouble is up to the individual.

If you soak seeds for a few days that may add beneficial hydration, and it will make it possible to remove the corky outer coating. Just chipping the seed is easier, but probably will only marginally improve germination, if at all. A longer stratification would not be a lot of trouble. For some types of irises, stratification at cold temperatures has been found effective, but there is no evidence that refrigeration is a benefit in germinating Louisiana iris seeds. Scarification by cutting into the seed itself sounds like a job for a person wishing to experiment, or a sadist, and is not a recommended gardening technique.

When To Harvest and Plant Seeds

There are variations in planting technique that don't seem to be directly related to breaking dormancy, but they nonetheless work well to germinate seed. I had always heard that Louisiana seeds should be harvested as the pods turn yellow and then planted immediately. The story was that if the seeds are allowed to dry out, they will go into a sort of "double dormancy" and not germinate the first year. (Dried seeds may remain viable for several years at least.) If I looked, I might be able to find and document this old advice, but the important thing is that it is wrong.

Consider an alternative technique described by Hooker Nichols, a Dallas hybridizer, in the Fall 2017 *Fleur de Lis*.

1. All pods are allowed to turn fully brown on the plant stalks.

2. Pods are then placed in cups until the fall when the pods are "shelled" using pliers [Note: by fall the pod will be quite hard and not at all pliable]
3. The cork coating on each seed is carefully cracked, and the inner core is removed
4. The seeds are labeled, bagged, and stored until February
5. In February, gallon pots are filled with Miracle-Gro potting soil, and the seeds are placed on top and covered with two inches of soil. Pots are watered to keep the soil moist.
6. Germination begins in the spring within about four weeks depending on soil temperature.
7. When three inches tall, seedlings are potted in gallon pots, watered with liquid fertilizer each week, and planted into the garden in September. The following spring, nearly 100 percent of the seedlings bloom.
8. The pots are held, and additional germination may occur the following fall.

Hooker did not report a germination rate for his seeds, so this technique can't be compared on that basis to other approaches. But obviously, this alternative works. The end result of nearly 100 percent bloom of seedlings two years after a flower was pollinated seems to be the same experience as with other approaches, but the intermediate steps are very different in their timing. With the keep-it-simple procedure, seedlings germinate (in Louisiana) in November, and are planted into the garden the following January or February. At that time, Hooker's seedlings are just germinating. In neither case is there bloom the following April. With Hooker's treatment of the potted seedlings during the following year, and with planting into the garden in September, he nonetheless achieves bloom by the next spring – which is the same time as first bloom via the "simple" method.

Here is something else, though. The conventional wisdom has been that one should not harvest seeds until they have "matured" – meaning when the irises are getting ready to shed their seeds (dehiscence) on their own. The idea is that important changes occur between the forming of the seeds and dehiscence that are essential for viability and germination. Some authorities note that in many plants, these "after-ripening" processes are essential. It might seem to be common sense that Mother Nature expels the seed from the pod only when they are "ready." Governed by this logic, I have refrained from taking seed until the Fourth of July. That is about the time in Louisiana when the pods are mature. It is also easy to remember, and before I retired, it gave me a long weekend. (Now every day is Saturday, except Sunday when there is a larger newspaper).



But an accidental experiment with *giganticaerulea* seed gathered by Mark Schexnayder this past spring showed that this conventional wisdom is not reliable. In a wild location with vast colonies of *giganticaerulea*, Mark collected a large number of pods on May 10, only a month or so after bloom. An experiment was not the rationale for the collecting; it was the knowledge that with the growth of other plants in the area and the presence of snakes, these seed pods would not be accessible in July. With no expectation of good germination – but with hope for a few new plants – Mark collected and brought a couple of buckets of seed pods to the Greater New Orleans Iris Society nursery in City Park. Volunteers shucked and planted the seeds by the keep-it-simple method in late May.

The pictures above record the germination that has occurred in all these pots. No record was kept of the number of seeds planted in the eleven seven-gallon pots shown, but they were spread thickly, perhaps with as much space between the seeds as the seeds were wide. The germination rate “looks” to be about as good as my best experience with the simple method.

Mark also threw unopened, leftover pods in a large pot on top of some old soil. With no intention to work

with them further, the pot with the un-shucked pods was just left on the warmest side of his house and given no attention. The pods deteriorated, and the



seeds were covered only by the rotted organic material. What occurred, as shown in the picture, was extensive germination. The seedlings are as thick as grass. After the pods deteriorated, the seeds were also thickly packed, of course. It may be that *giganticaerulea* seeds germinate readily, and certainly more freely than many hybrid crosses. A look at the mass of seedlings in this pot, however, suggests the hypothesis that rotting material from the pods might contain substances that break down chemical germination inhibitors contained in the seed. Perhaps worth an experiment.

Iris gardeners should keep in mind that the best handling of iris seeds must be adapted to their region of the country. The advice of Kevin Vaughn in his excellent *Beardless Irises: A Plant for Every Garden Situation* is on point:

After approximately eight weeks of development, the pod will turn brownish and start to split. The seed may be harvested at this time and spread out in little plastic weighing boats or small plastic dishes so that the seed may dry in a cool place.... In treating the seed this way, you have allowed the seed to after-ripen so that the inhibitors have developed in the seed coat and the majority of the seed will not germinate until spring, lowering the chances of it being killed in the winter. An exception to this generality would be if you lived in very benign climates, such as coastal California or along the Gulf Coast; seeds of both spuria and Louisiana irises may be picked as soon as the pod begins to split or turn brown and planted directly. In the case of the Louisiana iris seeds, the corky layer of the seeds may be peeled free of the rest of the seed, further eliminating a barrier to germination. The seeds are then soaked briefly and planted directly in pots. Germination can occur within as little as two weeks.

Even in benign climates, the young growing seedlings must be protected from any cold. Growing them in protected sites, a cool greenhouse or in a cold frame is required or else the tender young seedlings will be killed.

If you live in a less benign climate, allowing the seeds to dry and planting them later in the fall, will prevent any early germination so that the bulk of the seedlings will germinate in the springtime. I plant in 6- to 8" pots using a good sterile potting mix. The seeds are put along the surface of the potting medium, and an additional inch of potting mix is applied over the top. ... The pots are kept moist and allowed to be exposed to the elements. The constant moisture and cooler temperatures will eventually wash out the germination inhibitors present in the seed and allow the seed to germinate in springtime. Seeds of spuria and Louisiana irises are the most difficult to germinate and often the seeds will not germinate the first spring but often will germinate the following spring. Keep the pots in a cool, shaded position over the summer and make sure the pots don't dry out completely. In the case of Louisiana irises, removing the corky seed coat will often facilitate germination.

Avoid Excessive Moisture

Keeping seedling pots moist is essential, but too much water inhibits germination. Seeds require a certain amount of air, presumably oxygen, to germinate. Waterlogged pots are counterproductive. The worst germination I have had was when I had the bright idea to hold the seedling pots in a kiddie pool in water so I would not have to hand water. An inch or two of water may have been fine (and has worked for others) but the deeper water in my pools rotted the seeds.

This year, Gary Fine at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana achieved 82 percent germination with *I. giganticaerulea* seeds planted in peat and kept moist but not soggy. Another batch of seeds with additional water that allowed some saturation of the media yielded only 30-40 percent germination.

SLI member Steve Shepard of Ocean Springs, MS, once conducted an experiment I which he floated Louisiana iris seeds in water to see if they would germinate. Over

several years and thousands of seeds, Steve found that some seeds (especially if harvested early) sank and rotted, but others floated, stayed viable, and eventually germinated. His success rate varied widely with the parent cultivar, but overall was around 20 percent. Interesting and educational, but not a technique that improves on others.

No doubt others with experience over the years can cite bad practices as well as promising variations. As I think it is required to say, don't plant Louisiana iris seeds if you are allergic to Louisiana iris seeds. Otherwise, give it a try, even on a small scale. It is a real thrill to bloom flowers never before seen.

References

The best written description of the process of crossing two Louisiana irises is in SLI's book *The Louisiana Iris: The Taming of a Native American Wildflower*, 2nd ed., Chapter 5.

More vivid illustrations of the process can be found on the internet, although there is not an example dealing with Louisianas specifically. Hybridizing other types of irises is very similar, however. For a clear explanation, google "YouTube Iris Breeding at Stout Gardens".

Garden Reviewers Needed!!

The Fleur needs volunteer writers & photographers to sign up to write reviews of the gardens on the 2019 SLI tours!

Written submissions need to be a minimum of 500 words. Photographs need to be titled. These are some of the various events to be covered:

- **Baton Rouge Botanical Gardens**
- **Dr. Wayne Stromeyer's Estate**
- **Lake Martin**
- **Ron & Eugenie Belzer's garden**
- **Jim & Kathy Leonard's garden**
- **Avery Island Jungle Garden**
- **Symposium**
- **Judges Training**

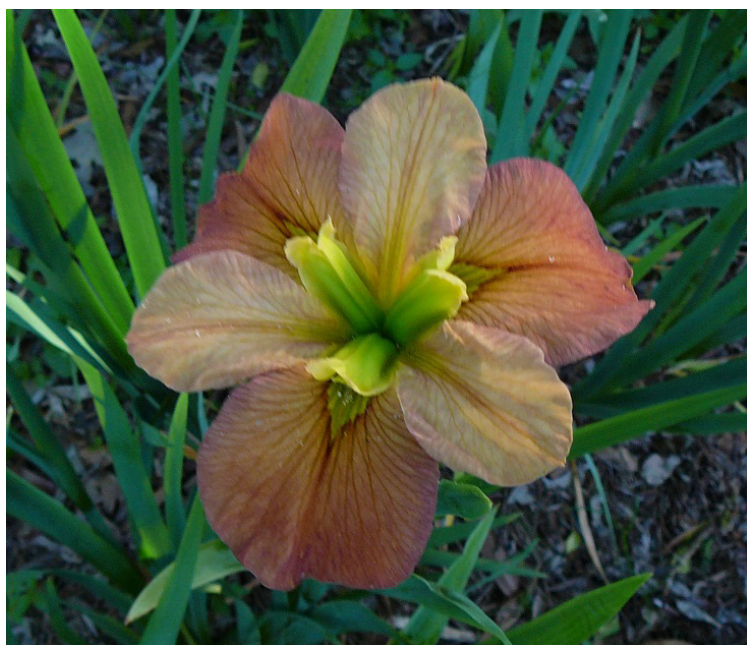
If interested in volunteering, please email the Editor at jaimelclouddesigns@gmail.com.

The Diversity of Color in Louisiana Irises

– “Unusual” Colors (Part 2)

~Story by Ron Killingsworth

"I have written previous "blogs" about the diversity of color in Louisiana iris blooms, in which we looked at specific colors. Today I want to show you some of my favorite "unusual color" irises. I use the term "unusual" but could use "odd" or "strange" instead. Of course, what I call "unusual" someone else would call "normal." So, let us just say I find them to be "unusual" colors or colors not often found in Louisiana irises. That does not in any way imply that I don't like them. I think my comments below will prove otherwise." - Ron



‘Heavenly Glow’ (Richard Morgan 1988) is an older iris but still one of my favorites and an “eye catcher” from way across the garden. It is registered as “orange red with yellow steeple signal and green style arms”. Sometimes colors are hard to describe. What was not described is the beautiful signal, an orange steeple signal surrounded by a darker “red?” with the same color veining on the falls. It did not receive any of the AIS awards but often wins show awards.



‘Honey Galore’ (Ron Betzer 1999) is registered as orange buff with orange buff style arms that are infused black and green toward the base. That is a good description although I readily admit I am not very skilled at determining colors, other than basic colors (red, white, blue, green, etc).

World of Irises

The Blog of The American Iris Society

Visit <https://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com> to read more blog entries about everything iris! With 20 contributors, there are many interesting topics to explore!



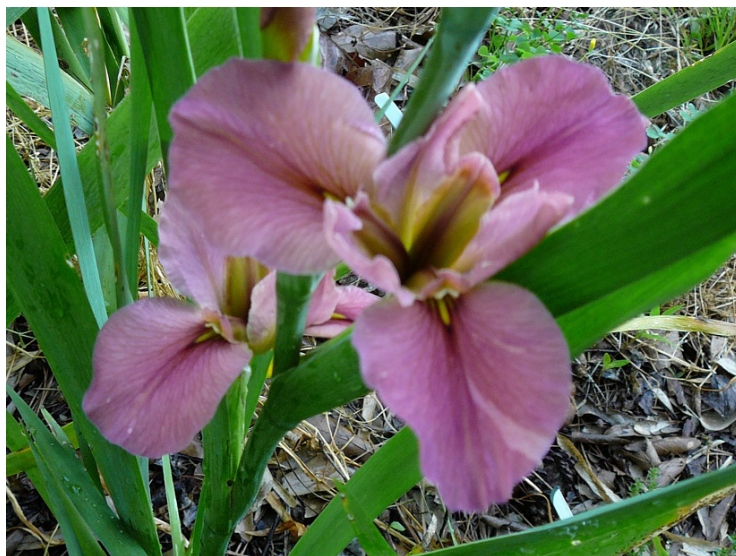
‘Hush Money’ (Mary Dunn 1998) has always been one of my favorite irises. It is registered as “stands cream with blue cast, falls cream, raised gold line signal” and that does not come close to describing this beautiful iris. First of all, it usually has smaller foliage and flowers than a lot of Louisiana irises. The stands tend to stand up, although not straight up, more like 45 degrees, and the falls tend to gracefully curve down. It is impossible not to love the iris and the name. It won a Honorable Mention in 2002 but never progressed any further in the AIS awards system.



‘I Remember You’ (Harry Wolford 2004) is registered as “light rose pink with falls darker rose pink.” There is a lot more than that going on in the stands of this iris. The pod parent is ‘Atchafalaya’ (Farron Campbell 1998). ‘Atchafalaya’ is a cartwheel form in dark red violet and that may be where the color was passed on to ‘I Remember You’, although their flower forms are different.



‘Katrina Dog’ (Patrick O’Connor 2009) is one of the few irises I can find that is registered as “light tan”. The registration reflects “light tan standards, light green style arms with tan tips, tan falls and yellow arrowhead signal, veined brown, moderately ruffled”. Again, color is subjective and although I can’t tell you what color this iris is, it just doesn’t seem “tan” to me. There is a very interesting story behind the name. Ask Patrick O’Connor about it if you meet him at a convention. I love irises with a meaningful name.



‘Little Woods’ (Patrick O’Connor 2004) is one of few irises registered as pink. The bold style arms, the deep dark center of the styles, the wine centered veins – there is just a lot going on in this flower.



‘Louisiana Fascination’ (Charles Arny 1969) is another iris registered as pink. It is certainly of the older open form and the registration is simple, “dawn pink self”. The pollen parent is ‘Her Highness’ (Levingston 1957), a collected *I. giganteaerulea* that is a white self.



‘Mister Sandman’ (Harry Wolford 2007) is certainly an “unusual” color. It is registered as “pale yellow dusted burgundy at the edges”. It is certainly an eye catcher and a welcomed relief from irises that are just yellow.



‘Miss Gertie’s Bonnet’ (Dorman Haymon 1999) is a beauty. You have to love the name, named for Dorman’s Aunt Gertie. He said it reminds him of the hat she always wore in the garden. Registered as cream stands and lavender falls, it is certainly a little more complex than that. It won an Honorable Mention in 2005.



‘N’Orleans Flambeaux’ (Rusty McSparrin 2013) is registered as a “yellow” but it looks more orange to me. I love the color, whatever it is, and the form with upright standards and flaring falls. Another beauty – but aren’t they all?

**This was originally published in World of Irises: The Blog of The American Iris Society in October 2018.*

**Be sure to notify the treasurer of any change in address.
The USPS will NOT automatically forward your
Fleur de Lis to your new address.**

Northlake Nature Center

Mandeville, Louisiana

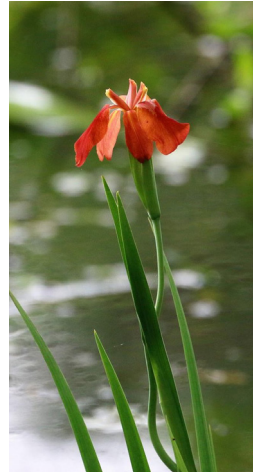
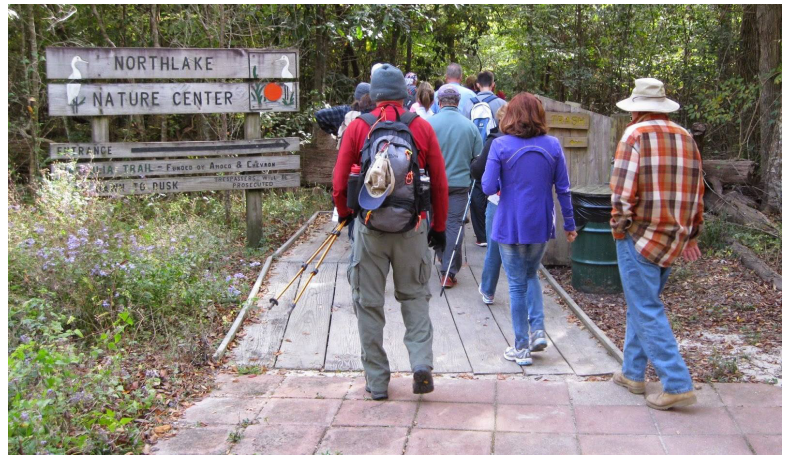
The species of Louisiana irises in the wild are scattered across much of the country, along the Gulf Coast from East Texas to Florida and up the Mississippi Valley. *I. brevicaulis* is even found in Ontario. There are only a few places where iris enthusiasts and organizations have brought them together in collections and formal gardens, but the Northlake Nature Center near Mandeville, Louisiana is the only site where all five species are displayed in a publicly accessible, naturalistic setting.



Northlake is an approximately 400-acre preserve just east of Mandeville on Highway 190 on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. It is about an hour's drive from New Orleans.

The Nature Center is located around a mile from the Lake, but it is behind and higher than the brackish and freshwater marshes that characterize the lakeshore. It is bordered by Bayou Castine on the west and features several ecosystems: cypress swamp, hardwood forest, and pine-hardwood forest.

Long-standing beaver dams have created backwater ponds in the cypress swamp which are the perfect habitat for water-loving irises. The iris that naturally inhabits the place is *I. virginica*, but the setting is entirely hospitable to the Louisiana species. *I. giganticaerulea* is found not far away in freshwater wetlands closer to the Lake.



The handsome kiosks along the boardwalks display a series of posters on the five species of Louisiana irises designed by GNOIS members. At left is *I. virginica*, the species found naturally on the site. The red iris above it is the rare *I. nelsonii*, found in the wild only in an endangered swamp southeast of Abbeville, LA.





With the support of the Nature Center, members of the Greater New Orleans Iris Society have systematically added all five Louisiana iris species to wetland areas. While one would never find them concentrated in the same place in the wild even if local growing conditions permitted, invoking educational license and consistent with the requirements of the plants, a natural display has been created that will offer visitors a unique opportunity to compare and enjoy multiple species, including different forms of each. This spring will be first bloom season in which all these irises have had a full year to develop. Visitors can expect a spectacular sight. Time will tell if all thrive at Northlake, but so far the results look good-to-fantastic.

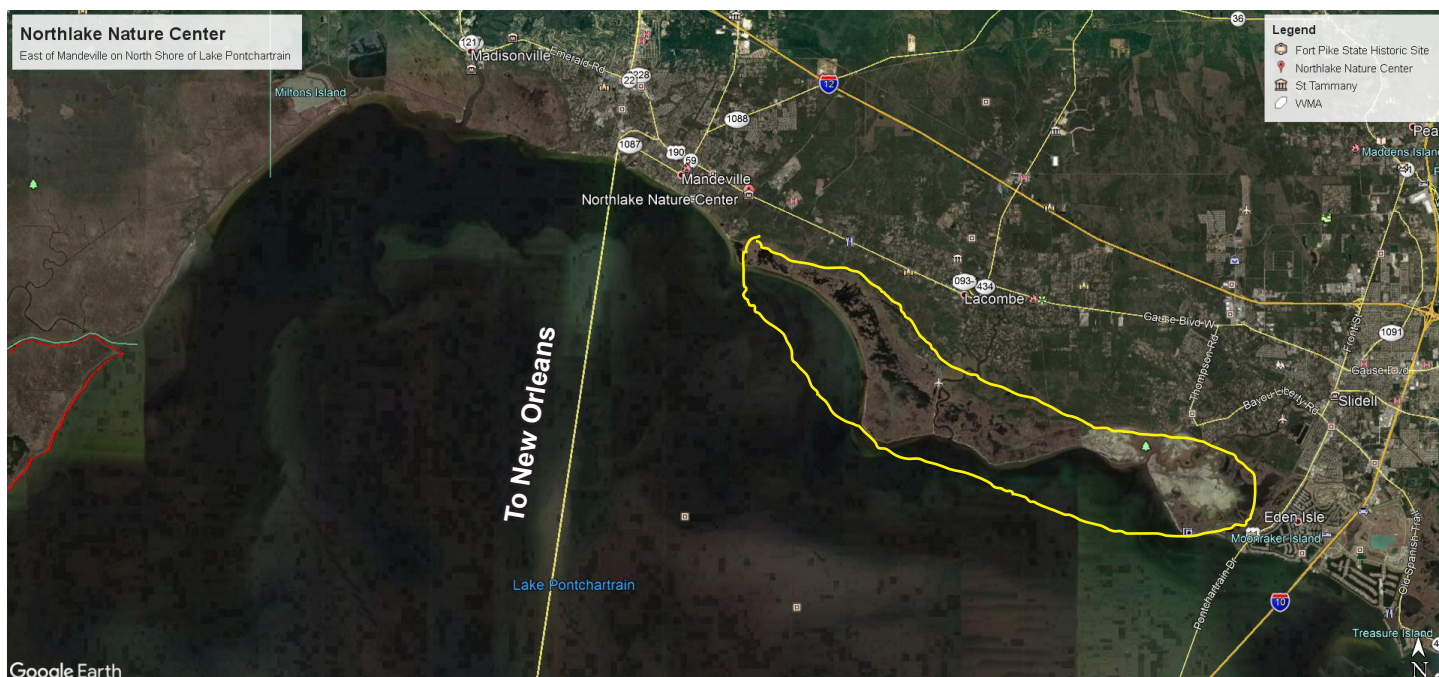
Swampy areas near the irises are crisscrossed by sturdy boardwalks from which to comfortably view wetland plants and habitat. Other, more upland areas of the Nature Center feature several long trails through different habitats and plant associations.

The north shore of Lake Pontchartrain is a diverse and interesting area featuring both fresh and brackish marsh and various types of upland forests. The Northlake Nature Center is the perfect place to start. The Nature Center's website can be found at: <https://northlakenature.org/>



*The irises in the upper left are *I. virginica*, which grow naturally at Northlake and along the Northshore of Lake Pontchartrain. The blooming irises above are *I. giganticaerulea*.*

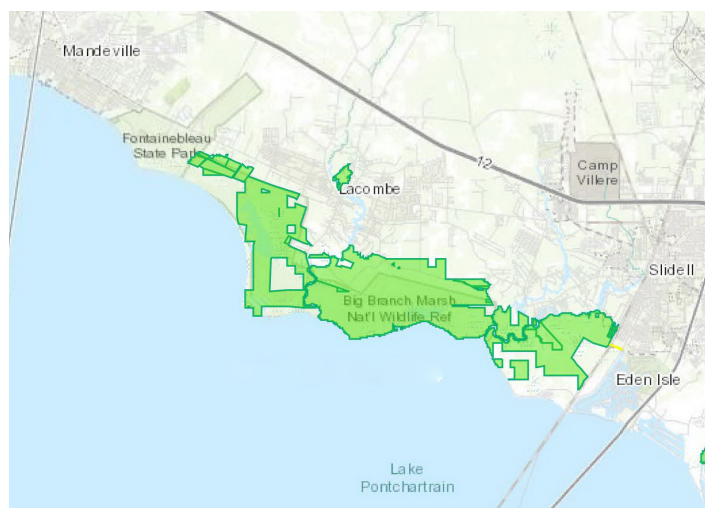




And just down the road

Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge

The 15,000-acre refuge, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, runs along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Big Branch stretches from Fountainebleau State Park (which is directly across Highway 190 from the Northlake Nature Center) to the outskirts of Slidell, a distance of around 15 miles. The refuge consists of not only fresh and brackish marsh but also cypress-tupelo forest, hardwood forest hammocks, and long-leaf pine savannah. The pine savannah is managed as habitat for the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker.



The extensive size and marsh environment mean that there are relatively few good spots for land access. The Visitor's Center is in Lacombe, about six miles east from the Northlake Nature Center and the place to get an overview and directions.



There are two good places to visit. First, a boardwalk off Boy Scout Road that loops through open marsh. The boardwalk terminates at Boy Scout Road near a long stand of wild irises in the ditches. Second, a drive down Lake Road that leads to the shore of Pontchartrain. Both roads are very easy to find with a little help from a GPS.



I. giganteaerulea is found but is not common throughout the refuge, possibly due to the especially acid soil characteristic of wetlands along the north shore of the Lake in St. Tammany Parish or to hurricanes that have pushed in brackish water, or both.

The USFWS Service maintains an excellent website for the refuge: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Big_Branch_Marsh/

Briarwood Reflections

~Story and Photos by Richard Johnson

2018 closed out and 2019 arrived in wet fashion for us. We have been blessed with lots of rain which has its positives and negatives. I prefer to focus only on the positive, however, and that is that our ground water sources are flowing nicely, which means we should have lots of spring water to hold us into the summer months. I do hope that the upcoming summer of 2019 is not as hot and dry as that of 2018!

The woods have taken on their winter look now that all the leaves have fallen. At first glance they look barren, however; if you take a closer look you will find signs of new beginnings hiding in plain sight. A stroll by almost any hole of any size that will retain water reveals the white globules of salamander eggs awaiting the trigger to hatch. Acorns, Buckeye and Hickory Nut shells are bursting and tender taproots are pushing into the fertile soil, building the root structure that will sustain them in the coming years. All of nature is awaiting the warm winds that signal spring and a new beginning.

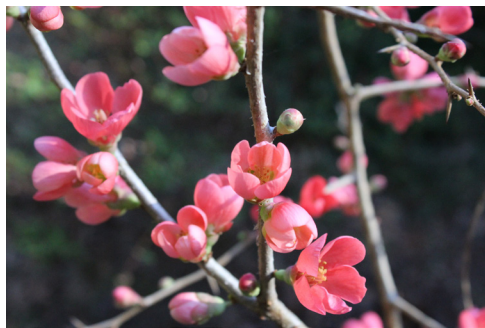
With the new year upon us, it is time for us to look to the future. Please take a look at our calendar of events and be sure to save the date for our Annual Spring Fundraising Picnic which will take place on Saturday, April 6. You will be receiving a formal invitation letter in the near future which will have the schedule of events as well as ticket purchase information. We will once again provide you the option to purchase tickets online via Brown Paper Tickets.

REMINDERS:

We have many opportunities for Scout troops, civic groups, and other volunteers to accumulate community service hours here at the preserve. Call (318) 576-3379 to find out more information. rely,



Spring Daffodils



Flowering Quince



Spring Daffodils

2019 Calendar of Events:

Spring Opening Day – Saturday, March 2nd

Annual Spring Fundraising Picnic – Saturday, April 6th

Fall Tom Sawyer Work Day – Saturday, October 26th



Briarwood is open for guided tours in March, April, May, October and November on Saturdays from 9 am until 5 pm and Sundays from 12 pm until 5 pm. Appointments for other times and for large groups are available by special request.

Briarwood Contact Information:

318-576-3379 • briarwoodnp@gmail.com • <https://www.facebook.com/cdormon>



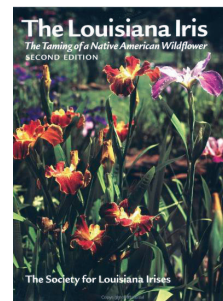
Society for Louisiana Irises Storefront

THE LOUISIANA IRIS: THE TAMING OF AN AMERICAN WILDFLOWER

Contributing Editors: Marie Caillet, J. Farron Campbell, Kevin C. Vaughn, and Dennis Vercher

Details: 254 pp, 111 color photos, 5 watercolors, 21 b/w photos, 14 line drawings, 11 tables, hardcover.

This authoritative treatment by The Society for Louisiana Irises is based on the first edition published by the Society in 1988, but it is considerably expanded. It covers every aspect of the history, botany, and development of these distinctive irises, with particular emphasis on the newest hybrids, hybridizing techniques, and cultural practices, and also includes suggestions for their use in the landscape and in floral arrangements. It should serve to introduce a wider gardening public to these colorful and versatile flowers. - \$30.00



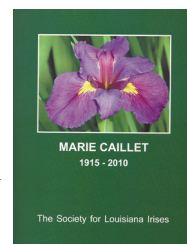
Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises - The History of Hybridizing (2007)

This Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises is a 100-page summary of how the "ditch irises" of Louisiana have been tamed and introduced into American gardens. Contents include informative articles on such early pioneers as Mary Swords DeBallion, Caroline Dormon, and Percy Viosca; the Shreveport and Lake Charles groups, the California hybridizers, and a wide variety of other contributors to the development of the Louisiana iris. Includes 30 color photographs of outstanding cultivars. Paperbound. - \$5.00 plus \$2.00 shipping within U.S.



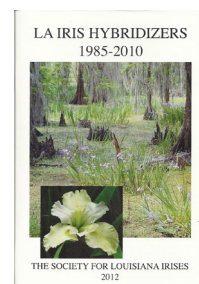
Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises honoring Marie Caillet (1915-2010)

This is a very high quality publication that pays tribute to Marie Caillet, a charter member of SLI, longtime editor of the SLI newsletter, and the "grandmother" of SLI for many of us. This is a 52 page 8.5 x 10 publication in full color with many pictures of Marie, species Louisiana irises, Marie Caillet Cup Winners with pictures, a listing of SLI Distinguished Merit Award winners from 1989 to 2010, and memories of Marie written by several members of SLI. - \$10 plus \$3 shipping within US



Louisiana Iris Hybridizers 1985-2010

This is a paper bound booklet consisting of 99 pages of color pictures, the Marie Caillet Cup Winners from 2001 to 2010 with color pictures, the Mary Swords DeBaillon Medal winners from 1986 to 2010 with color pictures and many articles written by the hybridizers during the period 1985 to 2010. This is a companion book for the Special Publication of 2007, which contains information on the hybridizers from the beginning to 1984. - \$5 plus \$2 shipping within US



Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises 1995

This paper bound special publication, edited by Marie Caillet and Joseph Mertzweiller, consist of 86 pages and contains "a half-century of progress", information on hybridizers, the development of the tetraploid LA irises, information on LA irises in Australia, culture of LA irises and many beautiful pictures of LA irises. There is a limited supply of this publication remaining so get them while they last. - \$5 plus \$2 shipping within US

The SLI Louisiana Iris Checklist CD!

The CD checklist is illustrated with photos of many of the cultivars and it can be displayed in three formats. It has a powerful search feature that allows you to search the checklist by cultivar attributes such as name, date of introduction, hybridizer, parentage and much more. The checklist lists names, descriptions, breeder/introducer and parentage of iris cultivars from the 1920's through the present. The iris are grouped by year of registration and/or introduction. The CD will cost \$10 for delivery to the United States,



***Any of these products & other Iris materials can be ordered from the SLI Treasurer Ron Killingsworth.
For shipment outside US please contact Ron Killingsworth directly for pricing***

Commercial Directory

Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden

608 NW 119th Street
Vancouver, WA 98685-3802

Phone: (360) 573-4472
aitken@flowerfantasy.net

www.flowerfantasy.net

Featuring Beardless and Bearded Irises

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Rusty McSparrin
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Schriever, LA 70395

Phone: 985-446-2329
E-mail: bois@charter.net
Web: www.bois-darc.com

Catalog with color photos online

Wholesale & Retail Prices

Cindy's Louisiana Iris

93 Cassaday Drive
Carriere, MS 39426

Phone: (601) 798-3352
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www.cindylouisianairis.com
cindyslairis@gmail.com

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Hybrid & Native LA Iris
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Phone: (816) 580-7116

thomascollier@juno.com

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Louisiana Irises, Rebloom Bearded Irises, Daylilies

Iris City Gardens

7675 Younger Creek Road
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email@iriscitygardens.com
www.iriscitygardens.com

Full catalog with color pictures available online.

Catalog text available as a PDF download from the website.

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Redbud Lane Iris Garden

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Kansas, IL 61933

Phone: (217) 948-5478
redbud142@gmail.com

Catalog \$1.00

Louisiana and Bearded Irises

Commercial Directory Listings are \$15.00 for four quarterly issues beginning with the spring issue. Costs prorated for listings beginning in later issues. No one time listings. Listings may include name, address, phone, wholesale/retail status, and specialty. Additional advertising information can be found here: <http://www.louisianas.org/index.php/advertising>

Want To Contribute to "A Few Favorites"?

The *Fleur* is seeking readers to contribute to a regular "Few Favorites" feature. Just pick out 3-5 of your favorite Louisiana irises and write a bit about why you like them. If you have pictures, great, but we have access to photos of most recent cultivars. The text can be brief (one to two pages is perfect) and that can include the pictures. Feel free to contribute notes and observations, and the *Fleur* staff will work with you to fit text into available space. The idea is to get more input from readers and present more information on popular Louisiana irises. Just e-mail the Editor and attach text and pictures, preferably in a Word file, or to get more information.

Is your subscription to the *Fleur de Lis* expiring?

Please check your mailing label to see if you need to renew your SLI membership!!

Iris Gardener **12/19**
222 Louisiana Iris Lane
Iris Bud, LA 12345

AMERICAN IRIS Society. SLI has elected to participate as a Section within the American Iris Society. Sections generally deal with the other types of irises, Spurias, Siberian, Japanese, and so forth.

SLI members are not automatically members of AIS, and a relatively few choose to join that organization. AIS membership is well worth considering, however. The organization publishes a beautiful quarterly Bulletin, *IRISES*, that covers all types of irises. While a small percentage of the pages deal directly with Louisianas, there is much to be learned by an appreciation of the Genus of which they are a part.

There are many benefits of AIS membership that you can discover by exploring their website: **www.irises.org** Membership information is there, including an electronic membership at a lower price, \$15. Regular individual AIS dues are: Single Annual, \$30; Dual Annual, \$35. Dues can be sent to: Tom Gormley, AIS Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 177, DeLeon Springs, FL 32130 USA. E-mail: aismemsec@irises.org



SLI CONVENTION 2019 will be held in Lafayette, Louisiana. Please put April 5-7 on your 2019 calendar and plan to attend!

Membership Information

Society for Louisiana Irises
Founded 1941

MEMBERSHIP To join or renew membership, send dues along with your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if any) to Ron Killingsworth, SLI Treasurer, 10329 Caddo Lake Road, Mooringsport, LA 71060. Make checks payable to the Society for Louisiana Irises.

Membership begins the month your application is received. If you are renewing, the renewal will extend your membership by the number of years you chose to renew. If your current expiration date is 09/** and you renew for three years in July (07), your new membership will be 09/**+ three years. You do not lose any months by renewing your membership early. If you are late in renewing, the renewal will be applied to the month in which your membership expired

DUES Rates for membership are:

SUBSCRIBERS IN THE UNITED STATES:

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS:

- Yearly, \$17
- Triennial, \$45
- Life, \$1,000
- Youth, \$5

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INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIBERS:

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS:

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- Triennial, \$82
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FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS:

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- Triennial, \$90

Society for Louisiana Irises Membership Form



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E-mail: _____ Phone Number: _____

United States Subscribers Annual Dues:


- ☐ Youth-\$5.00
- ☐ 1 Year (Individual)-\$17.00
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- ☐ 1 Year (Family)-\$22.00
- ☐ 3 Year (Family)-\$60.00
- ☐ Life-\$1,000.00

International Subscribers Annual Dues:

- ☐ 1 Year (Individual)-\$30.00
- ☐ 3 Year (Individual)-\$82.00
- ☐ 1 Year (Family)-\$33.00
- ☐ 3 Year (Family)-\$90.00
- ☐ Life-\$1,000.00

Return Form & Payment To:

Society for Louisiana Irises
10329 Caddo Lake Road
Mooringsport, LA 71060



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